

George Wileg

The Prologue

A pantomime to music. The main curtain opens partially to reveal a group of gnomes, their ugliness enhanced by the dim light emanating from a small campfire. They communicate only in inhuman sounding grunts and tones. Each has a purse or little treasure box which it jealously guards, compulsively counting and recounting its gold coins. Rumpelstilzkin enters, laughing maniacally and carrying a bundled baby. He hops around in a frenzy, showing his prize to the other gnomes who become excited over Rumpelstilzkin's acquisition. Suddenly, a Witch - who has been standing unnoticed with her back to the audience - turns around, giving the impression of appearing. A red spot is rigged behind the campfire, aimed upward. The Witch places her face into the upwardly directed beam creating a frightening facial illusion. She holds out her arms. The gnomes cower. The Witch opens her hands and gold coins pour onto the ground. The gnomes scramble for the treasure. Rumpelstilzkin hands the baby up into the Witch's arms. She raises the bundle skyward and looks forward with a screaming laugh as...

(BLACKOUT)

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SCENE 1

(Opening Procession: on the stage level, Pages enter formally and take their places while Townspeople, bearing simple, peasant gifts, enter from archway and rear of auditorium. The Processional ends as two Pages open the main curtain "by hand" revealing the throne-room with King Ludwig and Prince Theodor already in position.)

KING LUDWIG: Good people of my kingdom, how it pleases me to see you all again. During our travels, Prince Theodor and I could think only of returning to our beautiful kingdom and to our good and loyal subjects.

(The Crowd cheers as the Miller shepherds his Three Daughters up the steps from the floor level. They carry bouquets and hand-made chains of wildflowers.)

KING LUDWIG: What's this?

MILLER: (stepping forward) For you, your majesty. My daughters have prepared these small gifts for you both. (He kneels on one knee)

DAUGHTERS: (in unison) For you, your majesties. (They curtsey and then kneel on one knee)

KING LUDWIG: Good Miller, rise. And also you, Miller's daughters. Come and show us your dainty gifts.

(The two younger daughters present their gifts to the king while Katherine, the oldest, presents hers to Prince Theodor)

KING LUDWIG: (teasing) Miller,...is it?...Could it be possible?... (He moves from one daughter to the next)

MILLER: (flustered) What is it, your majesty? Is something wrong... with the gifts, your majesty?

KING LUDWIG: Indeed, Miller, I cannot believe it is true!

MILLER: Umm...er...uh...

KING LUDWIG: Yes!! I believe your daughters are even sweeter in nature and fairer in aspect than when the Prince and I left on our journey!

MILLER: (proudly) Indeed they are, your majesty.

KING LUDWIG: Why, what is it that you often say, Miller, about how a good natured child can change the world? (indicating first daughter) She can make wildflowers spring from the frozen earth, (indicating second daughter) draw back the stormclouds to make way for the sun and (indicating Katherine) even change the straw of the fields into gold.

PRINCE THEODOR: (who is enthralled by Katherine, blurts out) Oh, I agree!

(Theodor and Katherine are embarrassed and all laugh good-naturedly)

KING LUDWIG: Miller, I believe your daughter Katherine has cast a spell of her own over my son.

MILLER: Why, yes, your majesty...I mean, no, your majesty...She would not...

TOWNSPERSON: Get on with it, Miller! What about us? We have gifts, too!

SHEPHERD: For you, your majesty, we have brought two of our finest lambs.

TOWNSPERSON: Your majesty, please accept my gift.

YOUNG GIRL: A peacock feather for your majesty's hat!

WOMAN: Three fresh baked meat pies.

(The Townspeople hold up their gifts and cry out to the king.)

KING LUDWIG: Such kindness...(they quiet down) Such kindness.

My subjects and my goodfriends. How happy you have all made me with your fine, useful gifts. But today we celebrate more than our return from our journey. Today, there will be rejoicing for the throne beside me, so long empty, will be filled! I have brought home with me a new Queen!... (Crowd cheers)

(The Townspeople, encouraged by the King, climb the stairs and fill the throneroom. They all make merry, dancing and presenting their gifts to the King, who joins them wholeheartedly. Even the Animals have been brought into the throneroom.)

(Music for a second Processional begins. It marks the entrance of Queen Zalma, her children Prunella, Drusilla and Talbot and her Minister Hildebrand. They are fashionably and elegantly dressed. Their Procession is stylized to an absurd degree. Only, as they execute this over-rehearsed entrance, no one pays attention for they are all too busy having a rough-and-tumble time with the King. The Procession and the Merrymaking are in counterpoint. Queen Zalma becomes increasingly unnerved until, upon finding the throneroom in a state of confusion, she lets out a final shout...)

QUEEN ZALMA: Eeeeeegaaaaad!! Guards! Guards! What's all this riff-raff doing in my throneroom! Gggguaaards!!

KING LUDWIG: (calmly emerging from their midst, crown askew, holding gifts) Oh, hello, my dear. Look! Look! at all of this!

QUEEN ZALMA: (nearly speechless) I'm looking.

KING LUDWIG: See all the splendid gifts our friends...uh...our good and loyal subjects have brought for us.

(Queen Zalma and her entourage simply stare in disbelief.)

KING LUDWIG: Come. Come, my dear and take your rightful place... as Queen of all this...

(This is clearly not what the Queen expected, although she tries to hide her feelings. Her children are not nearly so polite. She attempts to control them and shoots devastating looks at her Minister.)

KING LUDWIG: My people, welcome Queen Zalma, a woman of high birth and refined taste, who will, I am sure, bring a new graciousness to our...simple court.

TOWNSPEOPLE: Long live the Queen!

KING LUDWIG: And with her, welcome her children, Princess Prunella, Princess Drusilla and Prince Talbot...(Crowd cheers)...and our lady's wise and educated counsel, Hildebrand...(Crowd cheers)

(A Page enters with a message for King Ludwig.)

KING LUDWIG: (reading) Bah! Stuff and nonsense! But I have only just returned home. Ach! (to Queen) My dear, I am afraid I must

depart immediately. My lord sheriff requires my presence to settle a dispute in the North.

PRINCE THEODOR: May I go with you, father? Surely, I am old enough to be included in such affairs.

KING LUDWIG: You are, my son. However, I had planned for you to spend the next few weeks in a different - but equally important - occupation. (Announcing) Good people of my kingdom. Now that I have wed once more, it is high time for my son, the Prince, to take a wife!

(The Queen and her entourage are again taken by surprise but, this time quickly recover as all presume that Theodor will wed Prunella, who rises and primps. King Ludwig extends his hand to Zalma, who rises.)

KING LUDWIG: My dear...during my absense, you will act in my stead. See to it that all the lovely maidens of my kingdom arrive at court next week to be considered. Take care in considering all of them for the maiden chosen from among my subjects will marry the Prince and one day be the Queen of this Kingdom! Now, come with me, my son and ride with me to the edge of the forest.

MILLER: We will see you on your way, sire.

(King Ludwig, Prince Theodor, the Miller and all the Townspeople exit.)

QUEEN ZALMA: (to Hildebrand) I should have your head for this! Will you look at where your goodly counsel has gotten me! I am trapped in this forsaken, out of the way kingdom, married to a... to a peasant king who so prefers the farms and stables to courtly life that he is not just content to go out tramping in the mud. Oh nooo. He must bring the mud and the animals and that rabble he calls his subjects in to the court. How can I live under these conditions!?

PRUNELLA & DRUSILLA: (begin to cry)

QUEEN ZALMA: How can my children live under these conditions!?! See this. How badly they are affected by all this low life. (she goes to comfort the girls)

TALBOT: (crossing to Hildebrand) Now see what you've done? (he kicks the Minister) It's all your fault! It's your fault that we're here and it's your fault that they're crying, again! All

I want is to have a little fun. I want to go back home. Back to where we came from.

HILDEBRAND: This is your home now.

TALBOT: No it isn't. This isn't my home. It will never be my home. Never, never, never!! (He throws himself down in a tantrum)

PRUNELLA & DRUSILLA: (to Minister) Now see what you've done!
(they both kick him)

PRUNELLA: (referring to Talbot) Now he's crying again!

DRUSILLA: I can't stand it! This is just as bad as the last place!

HILDEBRAND: Did it ever occur to your highnesses that if your natures were sweeter, so might be the places you are staying?

PRUNELLA: How dare you speak to us that way! What do you know about anything anyway? You arranged for this marriage, didn't you?

DRUSILLA: Queen of the Peasants! Princesses of the mud flats! That's what you've secured for us!

PRUNELLA: Ooooooh, I shall never be a Queen. There is no one for me to marry. Where are all the lords and ladies of the court?

TALBOT: The jesters? The musicians?

DRUSILLA: I hate it here!

PRUNELLA: I hate it here!

TALBOT: I hate it here!

PRUNELLA: OH, shut up, Talbot. I hate it here more than you do! I have more reason to hate it here!

TALBOT: No, I hate it here more than both of you!

(They dissolve into bickering and physical abuse.)

QUEEN ZALMA: Eeeegaaad! Out! Out!

HILDEBRAND: (after a pause) Of course, if your majesty were to listen to me, she could learn of an incomparable opportunity.

QUEEN ZALMA: I've had enough of you and your incomparable opportunities.

HILDEBRAND: You are Queen, are you not? He has been a widower for many years. You should have guessed that his court would be so... primitive. Now, you are Queen. All can be done to your bidding. The court can be made to suit you - to suit your every whim and desire. And what more can you ask for than to have your husband off on a journey, leaving all matters in your hands. Make your mark. Now. In the beginning.

QUEEN ZALMA: Yes...and I'll start with this absurd search for a wife for the Prince. Imagine, taking a low-born maiden to wife when he could have a noble, well-bred princess like my little Prunella.

HILDEBRAND: This is the perfect opportunity. While the King is away, you can establish true respect for the monarchy. Make an example of one of their leaders - like that Miller. Teach them a lesson. Find them all unacceptable. Punish a few. Soon there will be no other contenders than Prunella. She will not only be the perfect choice...

QUEEN ZALMA: (reading his mind) She will be the only choice.

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 2

(The Throneroom, one week later. Many of the peasants have brought eligible daughters bedecked with ribbons and flowers.)

QUEEN ZALMA: (to a farmer) You will be fined one hundred bushels of wheat.

FARMER: But, your majesty...

QUEEN ZALMA: Silence! or I'll make the penalty two hundred! And, if you were going to say, "But, your majesty, I haven't got one hundred bushels of wheat," don't bother. I don't want to hear a word about it. As a matter of fact, I don't want to hear another word about all your silly peasant squabbles. I am a Queen and I refuse to speak about whose cows are grazing in whose pastures. If you can't settle your stupid little problems among yourselves, I'll see to it that my Minister has the soldiers settle them for you, once and for all. Now where is the Merchant I sent for? Perfumes, jewels, new silks from the East - these should be the concerns of a Queen. Send for the Merchant, immediately!...(to Townspeople) Are you still here?! Take your muddy feet and your stinking animals and get out!

(Most of the Townspeople leave. Only the Miller, Kathrine and a handful of peasants and their daughters remain. The Merchant enters with a flourish. He is lavishly dressed and a number of Pages carry on his many and expensive wares.)

~~MERCHANT: Your most gracious majesty.~~

QUEEN ZALMA: Arise, my dear Merchant. I thought I should perish waiting for your arrival.

(The Merchant offers and demonstrates various items during the next portion of the scene. The Queen inspects them while she carries on.)

QUEEN ZALMA: (spotting the remaining peasants) Are you still here? I told you I've had enough of solving your problems. Begone.

MILLER: But your majesty...Forgive me, your majesty, but we haven't any problems.

QUEEN ZALMA: No?

MILLER: No, your majesty. We are only doing the King's bidding. We have brought our daughters to court.

QUEEN ZALMA: Whatever for?

MILLER: To present them to your majesty so that your majesty can choose who will marry the Prince.

QUEEN ZALMA: (laughs) Oh, yes. (to Minister) He must be referring to that little joke of my husband's about letting a common maiden marry a Prince. (they laugh) Can you imagine the King allowing the daughter of a Miller to marry a Prince? Can you imagine being so dull and stupid as to fall for such a joke?

MILLER: (insulted, speaking up) It is no joke!

HILDEBRAND: What did you say, Miller?

BACK MILLER: No joke was meant by the King. I assure you.

QUEEN ZALMA: You can assure us? You, a miller, dare to assure your Queen?

MILLER: I only wished to point out to your majesty...

QUEEN ZALMA: You only wish to insist to your majesty that your daughter be considered. I presume that one of these...milkmaids is your daughter.

MILLER: Yes. But they are all fair and all worthy of your majesty's consideration.

QUEEN ZALMA: Worthy?!? You really believe that a peasant could be worthy of marrying a member of the royal family? That a peasant deserves luxuries such as these? Take my advice. Remain as you are. It is what you deserve - what you are worthy of. A miller's daughter should marry a miller, not a prince.

MILLER: But his majesty looks with favor upon my daughter. Ask the young Prince if you cannot believe me.

QUEEN ZALMA: That won't be necessary. I am the Queen and I will make such decisions for my stepson. Well, if you even want me to consider any of your daughters, you had best think of something special about them. Such a child cannot be common...Well, can't

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any of you think of anything? ^{Ring} I shall give you very little more of my time. Come on, now. Come on. Very well, all of your daughters have been eliminated from the competition. Do not dare to bring them to this court - ever again. Begone.

MILLER: Wait, please, your majesty. I have something to say.

QUEEN ZALMA: (mockingly to the minister) The Miller again.
(to the Miller, patronizingly) What is it now, Miller?

MILLER: Your majesty, I have often said that a sweet natured child, such as my Kathrine can make wildflowers spring from the frozen earth (Zalma and Hildebrand stare, unimpressed and the Miller becomes more and more flustered), can draw back the stormclouds to make way for the sun)they look at each other bored) and can even cange the straw of the fields into gold!

QUEEN ZALMA: (laughs) Now that would be a pretty trick. Is this saying, then, to be your daughter's dowry?

MILLER: (defeatedly) Yes, your majesty.

QUEEN ZALMA: If this little saying is all you have to offer then...

HILDEBRAND: (interrupting) Then we accept your daughter!

QUEEN ZALMA: (astonished) What!?!

HILDEBRAND: Her majesty accepts your daughter and her generous dowry of wildflowers from the frozen earth, sun from behind the stormclouds and, most importantly, (to Queen) Gold from the straw of the fields.

MILLER: But...but...

(Confusion and buzzing among the other peasants increases.)

HILDEBRAND: (aside to Queen) You want to put an end to this business once and for all?

QUEEN ZALMA: Indeed.

HILDEBRAND: Then we'll set an example these peasants won't soon forget.

QUEEN ZALMA: Yes, indeed, Miller. Gold from straw. That will do nicely.

MILLER: But, your majesty misunderstands...

HILDEBRAND: Her majesty never misunderstands, Miller. You distinctly said that your daughter, among other things, could change straw into gold. Now, if what you mean by "misunderstand" is that you deliberately tried to mislead her majesty...well,... Do you know the penalty for lying to one's Queen, Miller?

QUEEN ZALMA: It's death, Miller. If you lie to your Queen, she will chop off your head. Is that simple enough for your simple, peasant mind, Miller?

HILDEBRAND: And, of course, your daughter could not possibly be allowed to marry without first proving her true worth.

QUEEN ZALMA: (delighted) Yes! Yes! Tonight your daughter will be locked in a room here in the castle. She will be given only a spinning wheel, a sheaf of straw and her own good, sweet nature. By morning, all the straw must be spun into gold or else off with her head! (laughs)

(The Miller and Kathrine embrace miserably. Others are horrified.)

QUEEN ZALMA: And, of course, if she can't accomplish this simple task, you'll die with her - for trying to lie to your Queen in order to better your position...Now, is there anyone else who would like to tell us about their daughter?

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 3

(A chamber in the castle. There is only a stool, a spinning wheel and a standing sheaf of straw. Rumpelstilzkin is hidden inside the straw. It is twilight.)

MILLER: Oh, Kathrine, can you ever forgive me? (He stifles a sob)

KATHRINE: (comfortingly) Father, there was nothing you could do. They were determined to have their way.

MILLER: But if I hadn't told them...Now I curse that saying!

KATHRINE: Don't. They would only have found another excuse to make an example of us both.

MILLER: But the King wanted...

KATHRINE: The new queen and her minister don't care what the King wants. They will carry on as they please at least until he returns.

MILLER: By then, it will be too late for us. For you, my dearest daughter.

THE PAGE: Pssst. You must come along before they discover that you are gone.

MILLER: Yes, in a moment.

KATHRINE: Try to contact the Prince. He is our only hope. He is kind and just as his father is. I am sure that he knows nothing of the Queen's plan or of our imprisonment. Now, go quickly.

(They embrace.)

MILLER: First, I have two gifts for you. (taking them from his pocket) Your mother's locket and ring...They were meant for a much happier occasion.

KATHRINE: For my wedding day?

MILLER: (nods)

KATHRINE: I shall probably have none.

MILLER: They are yours, even so.

KATHRINE: (takes them and embraces her father) Father, I'm so frightened. (she begins to cry)

THE PAGE: (returning urgently) Quickly! Quickly!

(The Miller exits hastily)

(Kathrine follows her father to the door, crying softly. She turns and looks around the room. She walks center, clutching the ring and locket. She looks at them lovingly, deriving comfort from them. She places the ring on her finger and the locket around her neck. This sends her into a pleasant reverie, which ends abruptly as the realities of the straw and the spinning wheel send her back into a sobbing state. Suddenly, the sheaf begins to move and Kathrine can hear a tiny voice from within it.)

RUMPELSTILTZKIN: Let me out! Let me out of here, I say!

(Kathrine approaches cautiously)

RUMPEL.: (whining, exasperatedly) Ooooooh, won't someone let me out of here? (He starts jumping and stamping, tantrum-like) Let me out! Let me out! Oooooh!

(He starts running about with Kathrine following at a cautious distance. Rumpel. begins crying loudly, thus standing still long enough to allow Kathrine to untie the sheaf and pull away the straw. He remains standing there with his eyes closed and his arms "pinned" to his sides.)

OOOOH! I'll never get out of here. Never, ever, ever!

KATHRINE: Little man?...You're free...Little man...You're free to go.

RUMPEL.: I am? I am!! Oooooh, that's just fine, just perfectly fine. Let's go. Get away from all this straw. Don't care if I never see another stick of straw...Come on, ...let's go...

KATHRINE: But how? We're locked in.

RUMPEL.: You did me a favor. I'll do one for you. Come with me. I'll get you out

KATHRINE: You will!! (remembering) I can't. My father. They have my father, too. He'll surely die if I've escaped.

RUMPEL.: Very well. Do as you like. I must be on my way. I'm headed for a neighboring kingdom. I've heard about...(trying to remember) a Lady..Zalma and...Prunella, Drusilla and Talbot, her children...and...her minister...

KATHRINE: Hildebrand.

RUMPEL.: Yes, that's it: Hildebrand. (rubbing his hands with anticipation) Quite a greedy little group, I understand.

KATHRINE: Yes. They are.

RUMPEL.: What? Just how would you know?

KATHRINE: Travel no further, little man, to find your greedy friends. Lady Zalma is now Queen Zalma, her children princesses and a prince, her minister, counsel to a Queen. And Kathrine, the Miller's daughter sits in a dungeon, commanded to turn straw into gold or die. Take my advice, little man, leave this kingdom and forget about dealing with those greedy beings. Go and find yourself a happy kingdom - a kingdom like this one once was.

RUMPEL.: Oh, but happy kingdoms don't interest me. I am intrigued by the workings of greed. Only with the help of greed can I manage my...uh...little bargains.

KATHRINE: (has not been listening to him) I suppose so.

RUMPEL.: Oh, but you haven't been listening to me.

KATHRINE: I'm sorry. I haven't much strength left - even for listening.

RUMPEL.: Of course you haven't, my dear. Why not lie down and rest. I could be persuaded to do your spinning for you. For a price, of course.

KATHRINE: What do you mean, do my spinning for me? Didn't you understand? They want me to spin straw into gold.

RUMPEL.: Yes. I heard you. Now, what do you have to give me? Quickly now! Name my payment or I shall demand a price.

KATHRINE: Ah...um...

RUMPEL.: Then, for spinning straw into gold, I demand...

KATHRINE: A ring! My mother's ring! (taking it off) Here! Take it, please, if you can do what you say. You will save my life and my father's.

RUMPEL.: Our bargain has begun. Now, sleep peacefully and, when daylight breaks, the work will be done.

KATHRINE: Little man, how can I ever thank you? Surely you are not so interested in greed as you say. You have agreed to save my life in return for a simple peasant's ring. What part could greed have in any of this?

RUMPEL.: We shall see. Now sleep. For I will not work as you watch.

(Kathrine lies down. Rumpel. passes his hand over her as if casting a spell.)

RUMPEL.: Sleep. For though you think that you've been saved, the web of greed tightens around you. Our bargain has only begun. Soon I'll take from you that which you'll hold most dear...and, then, my work in this kingdom will be done.

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 4

(The next morning. In the darkness, we hear two cock's crows.
The third crow is interrupted by...)

QUEEN ZALMA: Eeeegaaad!

(The Queen, Prunella, Drusilla, Talbot and Hildebrand stand in amazement around the golden sheaf of straw. An Executioner stands over Kathrine, who, when awakened by the Queen's exclamation, sees only the Executioner.)

KATHRINE: (screams) Oh,no! I knew it was only a dream! The little man was only a dream. It's daybreak and I am to die.

QUEEN ZALMA: What are you chattering about, you stupid creature? You're not going to die...not yet...You seem to have done a fairly good job on your night's work.

KATHRINE: Then may I leave?

QUEEN ZALMA: Certainly not. We wouldn't dream of losing such a valuable guest at court.

(Queen and Hildebrand move downstage to confer.)

QUEEN ZALMA: Why, we can keep her at this for months. By that time, we'll be so rich we won't need anyone or anything. Kings will come seeking us. When we've finished with her, we'll chop off her head anyway. (back to Kathrine) Seeing as you have done such a passable job on one sheaf of straw, we have decided that it would be proper, before you marry the Prince, to spin some more in order to accumulate a more fitting dowry.

PRUNELLA: But what about me? I thought I was supposed to marry the Prince? You promised me! What about me!?

HILDEBRAND: You will be dealt with shortly.

QUEEN ZALMA: I will see that you are provided with sufficient straw to last the night. Of course, the terms of our bargain are the same, my dear. (indicates Executioner) And, if you fail... See you on the morrow...

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 5

(Monologue to audience.)

RUMPELSTILTZKIN: On the second night, the Miller's daughter sat crying once again. She was sure that her little man from inside the straw would not appear. And without the golden straw, she and her father would surely die. But, of course, I did appear and, once again, I agreed to spin the straw - for a price. This time I took her mother's locket. But next time...(cackles). Greed spins such a lovely web.

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 6

(The Throneroom)

MERCHANT: I think your majesty will be especially pleased with these delicate brocades. Perhaps they catch the fancy of your eldest daughter. I dare say she will soon be readying her wedding trousseau.

DRUSILLA: Not Prunella! Prunella's never going to be married

PRUNELLA: Shut up, Drusilla!

DRUSILLA: I will not! I'll say whatever I please.

PRUNELLA: Mother! Tell her to shut up. Little wretch!

DRUSILLA: So, I'm a little wretch, am I? (grabs something from Prunella, turns to run and bumps into Talbot)

TALBOT: Oooooow! You stepped on my foot! You stepped right on my sore toe! You know I hurt that foot only this afternoon!

(The two girls are now running around the throneroom. The Merchant fears for his merchandise. He tries to protect it but some things get knocked over.)

TALBOT: Mother!! (ad. lib.) MERCHANT: Your majesty, please!
(ad. lib.)

QUEEN ZALMA: Silence! I've had enough of the whole lot of you! Out! Out!

(The children exit first, squabbling. The Merchant backs out apologetically and bumps into entering Prince Theodor.)

MERCHANT: Excuse me, my lord.

QUEEN ZALMA: (without looking) Talbot! I thought I told you to get out! (sees Theodor and sweetens) Ooooh, Theodor, my dearest, I didn't realize it was you.

PRINCE THEODOR: Step-mother, I am very disturbed.

QUEEN ZALMA: Theodor, what is it? Please, let me help you. I do so want your father to be pleased with the way we have been getting acquainted while he's away.

PRINCE ZALMA: I assure you, step-mother, that my father will be no more pleased than I was to discover that the Miller and the Miller's daughter have been locked up in this castle - held against their will for two days.

HILDEBRAND: (sternly) I assure you that her majesty need not...

QUEEN ZALMA: (interrupting, smoothing over) Oh, my dear, my dear. You've discovered our little surprise. See, now you have only a portion of the story and you have gotten it all confused. We did want it to be a surprise but now that you've uncovered our little scheme...well, now we'll explain it all, won't we Hildebrand? You see, the Miller and his daughter Kathrine are hidden away here in the castle because Kathrine is to be your bride.

PRINCE THEODOR: She is?!

QUEEN ZALMA: Why, yes. You remember that before your father left, he charged me to make a thorough search among the eligible girls of the kingdom to find a suitable wife for you...

PRINCE THEODOR: Yes.

HILDEBRAND: That is precisely what her majesty and I have been doing. The Miller's daughter is our choice. She and her father have been...lodged here in the castle for their own well-being - for their protection until the wedding.

PRINCE THEODOR: Then, let us proceed with the marriage.

QUEEN ZALMA: What?

PRINCE THEODOR: Let us proceed with the marriage. The sooner, the

better.

QUEEN ZALMA: But...what about your father? Surely you want to wait until he returns.

PRINCE THEODOR: Perhaps.

HILDEBRAND: Oh, but her majesty insists that you wait until your father's return. Now, of course, if you would like to ride out to fetch him home sooner, I am sure that her majesty will understand that you cannot contain your joy and wish to bring the happy day closer by hastening your father's return.

PRINCE THEODOR: Then I will. With your permission, step-mother.

QUEEN ZALMA: Safe trip, my son.

(The Prince walks DS and is met by the Page who helped the Miller.)

THE PAGE: (concerned) But, my lord...

PRINCE THEODOR: I don't believe a word of it.

(BLACKOUT)

(The Spinning Room)

HILDEBRAND: Her majesty has decided to give you one last chance to prove your worth. Bring in the straw!

KATHRINE: But, your excellency, her majesty promised that I would be released.

HILDEBRAND: She promised nothing of the sort. She merely said that you would be allowed to marry the prince after you have properly established your worthiness. And so you will, if you pass this final test. If, by tomorrow morning you have filled this room with golden straw, you shall be proclaimed throughout the land as the one selected to marry our beloved prince. Of course, should you be unable to accomplish this final feat, all the others will be considered invalid and you will, of course, be executed for lying to our most beloved queen and for pretending to be a maiden worthy of marrying our young prince. 'Til the morrow. (He exits)

(The Page tries to hang back to speak to Kathrine. The Minister re-enters.)

HILDEBRAND: I assure you, page, that your business here is finished. If you should have any further contact with this guest, you will share her fate. Now, get out!! (to Kathrine) Sweet dreams.

KATHRINE: Surely, I am as doomed right now as I was two days ago. They will outlast me for they can demand gold from straw more often than I can produce a magical gnome to give it to them. In any case, I have nothing more to give to the little man in payment for his spinning. My mother's ring was payment for the first night - her locket for the second. I have no more possessions. I can make no other payment.

RUMPEL.: (laughing from under the straw) Oh, yes there is! Oh, yes there is!

KATHRINE: (excitedly) Little man!? Little man, is that you!? (she begins digging through the hay)

RUMPEL.: (laughs as he is being tickled by her searching. Emerges in a frenzied state) Tomorrow I brew, today I bake,
And then the (laughs) away I'll take;
For little deems my royal dame
That (laughs) is my name!
Is my name. Is my name.
That (laughs) is my name!

KATHRINE: (following him, ignoring his recitation) Oh, you've come back! You've come back!

RUMPEL.: (still dancing) Indeed, I have! Indeed, I have!
That (laughs) is my name!

KATHRINE: Can you help me, little man? Only one more time. They have promised only one more time and I shall be released and marry the Prince.

RUMPEL.: Indeed you will. Indeed, you will.

KATHRINE: What say you, little man? I shall marry the prince?

RUMPEL.: Indeed, you will. Indeed, you will...If you can turn this pile of straw into gold. (dances on)

KATHRINE: OH, but I cannot without your help. Am I really to marry the prince if only I pass tonight's test?

RUMPEL.: (nods head vigorously)

KATHRINE: Then I must pass the test! Just one more test! Just one more test and I shall be a princess!

RUMPEL.: Princess...for a price.

KATHRINE: (remembering) Oh, yes. The price. I have nothing more to pay you with.

RUMPEL.: Perhaps not now - but you will. You will!

KATHRINE: Of course. When I am Princess! When I am Princess I shall be rich. Then I will have many lovely gifts to give to you. Jewels far better than a peasant woman's ring and locket.

RUMPEL.: Indeed, you will! Indeed, you will!

KATHRINE: Little man, name your price. Name your price for when I am Princess, I will give you what you will!

RUMPEL.: (stops dancing about - he has her) Then, we have struck a bargain.

KATHRINE: We have! We have! Whatever you will in exchange for a roomfull of gold!

(Rumpelstilzkin takes a sheaf of straw and places it in Kathrine's arms. He begins to draw out straw which seems to have turned to gold simply upon his touch. He dances, laughs and chants. Kathrine becomes even more excited for seeing the task being accomplished.)

RUMPEL.: Tomorrow I brew, today I bake
And then the (laughs) away I'll take
For little deems my royal dame
That (laughs) is my name!
...and now I name my price. When you are Princess...When
you are Princess...

KATHRINE: Yes! Yes! Rubies! Diamonds! Name your price!

RUMPEL.: When you are Princess, I will claim your first-born child. (laughs maniacally)

(Kathrine swoons and falls to the ground. Rumpelstilzkin laughs maniacally as...)

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 8

(That same night, in another part of the castle, two cloaked and hooded figures cross from the archway, climb the stairs and start across the stage. The Page enters from behind them. He does not recognize them to be the King and Prince Theodor.)

THE PAGE: Halt! Who's that? Halt, I say or I shall call for the guards! (seeing his face then falling on one knee) Sire!

KING LUDWIG: Rise, my loyal and watchful page. My son has already spoken to me of your bravery.

PRINCE THEODOR: Tell us, what has become of Kathrine and her father?

THE PAGE: They are still well. But, this evening Hildebrand had four times the usual amount of straw brought into the chamber. And once again they have commanded her to spin it to gold or die in the morn. This time I fear the sentence will be carried out for I have heard them plotting to take the golden straw and flee.

KING LUDWIG: Your attempts to resist the Queen's treachery shall not go unrewarded but before this unhappy business can be finished you must help us to hide in the castle until dawn. Then we will catch them amidst their greed and treachery. Help us so that we can restore our kingdom to its happy if unworldly state.

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 9

(Spinning Room - the next morning. The cock crows twice only to be drowned out by the delighted shouts of the Queen, Hildebrand

and the Queen's Children. They dance gleefully amidst the golden straw. Rumpelstiltskin has completed his work. A numb and staring Kathrine sits on the stool with the Executioner standing behind her.)

QUEEN ZALMA: Well done, Miller's daughter! Hildebrand, perhaps we were hasty in our decision about doing away with our delightfully talented little guest. I am beginning to think that she will make an excellent travelling companion.

PRUNELLA: Imagine, everything around us will be gold!

DRUSILLA: Our garments, our eating utensils...

PRUNELLA: The very mattresses on which we sleep. Everything!

QUEEN ZALMA: We shall build ourselves a golden castle and kings and princes from all corners of the earth shall come to kneel before us.

TALBOT: Well, it certainly sounds better than living in a kingdom like this with sheep in the throneroom.

QUEEN ZALMA: And an oaf of a king for a husband.

PRUNELLA: And a silly peasant king for a father.

DRUSILLA: (mockingly) Good cows and chickens of my kingdom.

HILDEBRAND: With this young maiden, we have found the key to seizing all we want - riches, power...All will be ours!

(During the above, the King and Prince have entered quietly from behind. The Executioner bows in deference to the King, who is backed up by the Pages.

KING LUDWIG: All? All of what I ask? (The group is stunned) Being a silly peasant oaf of a king, I cannot quite understand how it is that all the kings and princes of the earth will flock to kneel at your feet when, for the rest of your lives, there will be no court on earth that will make you welcome. Tell me, wise minister, for indeed, I have been a foolish man - tell me where you shall go when you are driven - all of you - from my kingdom, penniless? Where will the Merchant go, Lady, to show you his wares when my couriers have gone to every known kingdom with word

of your treachery. As for you once-royal children, your dispositions and bickering will keep any man, silly peasant or otherwise, from becoming a father to you! Now, get out of my sight, all of you, before I exact a greater penalty!

(All exit but the King, the Prince and Kathrine)

KING LUDWIG: Come, my son and see to the welfare of Kathrine, your bride-to-be. (He exits)

KATHRINE: (sobbing) No, never will I be that.

PRINCE THEODOR: Kathrine, Kathrine, the danger has passed and we will be wed. My father shall see to it.

KATHRINE: No! Never, never.

PRINCE THEODOR: Kathrine, please.

KATHRINE: The little man! He changed the straw into gold! His magic did all this. And his magic will take a payment that I could never bear to give!

PRINCE THEODOR: Whatever it is, we will find a way out. We will seal up this room with all the golden straw in it. His magic will be sealed in here, too. Soon, he will forget about us. We will not take his golden straw. Then, whatever your bargain, it will be broken.

KATHRINE: Could that be?

PRINCE THEODOR: Not a straw will be taken and the room will be sealed tight. All will be as if it never happened and you shall be crowned princess of this kingdom. Come, my Kathrine, there is much to be done before our wedding feast.

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 10

(Monologue to audience)

RUMPELSTILTZKIN: Oooh and quit a wedding feast it was, too. Dancing, singing, table upon table laden with food. (laughs) It was exhausting just to watch. Of course, before the marriage they had the spinning room sealed up tight. A fine job they did of it, too. The Prince saw to it that every single piece of golden straw was carefully placed into the room beforehand. But a bargain is a bargain or my name isn't Rumpel...(catching himself) Ooops! Anyway, that Kathrine was in such a state that I knew that if they saw hide or hair of me, she would give no thought at all to having a child. So, for the first year, I went about my business elsewhere. By that time, Princess Kathrine was convinced that I would never be heard from again. Foolish girl. Today, I shall take the reward for all my trouble. After two year's absense, Princess Kathrine shall hear from her little man again. Today is the day of her baby daughter's Christening. Today, I will get what I bargained for and all the kings and queens, faeries and spirits in the land will not stop me. (laughs)

SCENE 11

(The throneroom is festively decorated with an elaborate cradle as the focal point. King Ludwig, Prince Theodor and Princess Kathrine preside. The Miller, Kathrine's two sisters and the Page hold places of honor. The pages march with banners. The Townspeople bring their gifts to the new baby and her parents. An elegant procession of faeries, spirits and nymphs present their gifts to the child. A final gift, contained in a large box, is carried on. Much to everyone's confusion, out pops Rumpelstiltzkin. Only Kathrine realizes, in horror, what the appearance of the gnome means. Rumpelstiltzkin dances and chants, this time leaving out only his name. Princess Kathrine rushes to snatch up the baby. She begs Rumpelstiltzkin not to take the baby. Tells him that he can have back all of the golden straw, every piece. He only concedes that if someone can guess his name, he will give up his claim. All guesses are wrong. The Prince and the pages try to protect the baby. Rumpelstiltzkin immobilizes them all with his magic and makes his escape with Alethia, the baby.)

RUMPELSTILTZKIN

ACT II

(The action takes place 16 years later)

SCENE 1 - The Prologue

(Rumpelstiltzkin and the gnomes shepherd a group of docile children across the stage. They are accompanied by the Witch, who walks like an infirmed old woman with a shawl over her head. The Witch hangs back and Rumpelstiltzkin joins her. She gives him his payment in gold pieces, sweeps off the shawl, cackles and exits.)

SCENE 2

(Deep in the woods in a Land of Gold - Pantomime to music in which the entire spinning process is represented. A group of young maidens carry out the tasks, among them, Alethia, the grown daughter of Prince Theodor and Princess Kathrine. The girls tend golden sheep, shear, wash, card, spin with distaff and spinning wheel and, finally weave golden cloth on a golden loom. Rumpelstiltzkin and the gnomes enter with the new children. Rumpelstiltzkin and his men are the overseers. It is their job to discourage all attempts to discard chores and escape from their drudgery. When they aren't convincing enough, there is the terrible threat of the Witch who watches them from her tower.)

HELGA: More children?! Will it ever end?

TRILBY: Poor creatures. All they face is a life like ours - a life of drudgery.

MARELDA: We're luckier than they are in one sense. At least we're a few more years closer to death than they are.

ALETHIA: Marelda!

MARELDA: I don't care! Even dying would be welcome to escape from here. I just can't bear it any longer. (She begins to cry)

CHILDREN: (Begin to cry in sympathy)

ALETHIA: (gently) Now, now. And see what you've done? You've

upset the little ones. Try to be a brave girl. For them. To help them.

MARELDA: I'll try. (to children) Come with me. I'll show you where you're to sleep. Later, each of you will be given a job. You all will learn to spin, for that is what you'll be doing from now on.

CHILD #1: Do we have to?

ALETHIA: I'm afraid so.

CHILD #2: But what if we don't want to?

MARELDA: You haven't much choice. None of us do. (nodding towards gnomes) They watch over us constantly. At night, we live in that cottage. From daybreak to sunset, we work, herding golden sheep and weaving golden cloth.

CHILD #3: But I like to play.

MARELDA: There won't be any time for such things - at least during the day.

TRILBY: In the evening, though, we sometimes manage to have some fun - dance or play games. Then, we are not so closely watched.

HELGA: In the evening, the Witch leaves her tower and doesn't return until dawn.

CHILD #1: What's a witch?

HELGA: She's the old woman who came through the woods with you.

INGRID: Or sometimes, she's the bird in the tree: watching to make sure you're not idle.

ODELIA: Or sometimes she's a cat who wanders about.

MARELDA: She can change herself into anything at all. And she will in order to watch us and make sure that we fill her treasure room with more and more golden cloth.

CHILD #2: Where's the treasure room?

TRILBY: Up there in her castle. From there, she can see everything that goes on here on the clearing and over there in the pasture.

RUMPEL.: (entering) Ooooh! Idle talk! Idle talk! All the time. Get on with your work. Hurry up! Hurry up! Or I shall get very angry with all of you and send you up to the Witch's tower to be cooked up for her breakfast. (laughs)

(The girls hurry back to work as...)

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 3

(A campfire is lit DS. Rumpelstilzkin and the gnomes huddle around it.

RUMPEL.: Tomorrow I brew, today I bake
And then the child away I'll take
For little deems my royal dame
That Rumpelst...

(The Witch appears behind him, startling him)

RUMPEL.: Eeek! I wish you wouldn't do that! You're always sneaking up behind me and scaring me half to death.

WITCH: You deserve it, Rumpelstilzkin. What if I had been someone else? And what if that someone else had heard yor name? I have told you time and again that your powers will stay with you only so long as no one knows your name. I strongly suggest that you exercise more caution in the future.

RUMPEL.: Ooooooh. All right. I will try. I will.

WITCH: You must take your duties more seriously, gnome. Without my aid, you would still be living in the forest with your charming little...friends, here. Instead, in my service, you can roam the world, striking your special bargains and bringing me the reward - for which I pay you handsomely. What more could those innocent

victims of greed ask for than to be brought up in a Land of Gold. We take them away as little babies and raise them with all the gold any of their greedy parents could ever want. Only the children see so much of the gold that it has no value to them at all. After a few days of spinning, they hate the sight of it. Perfect workers to fill my treasure room. (laughs) My perfect little kingdom. (Threateningly) So long as you keep a close watch. See to it that nothing goes wrong, gnome, or you shall pay dearly. I will return at daybreak. Remember to keep a close watch. Visitors are not welcome in this kingdom. Especially young male visitors. No one is to distract my little princesses from their perfect, golden life. (laughs and exits)

RUMPEL.: (taking his revenge on the gnomes) Come on, come on; Get up! Be about your business. (one hangs back) Now!!!! (When he is left alone, he poutingly recites:)

Tomorrow I brew, today I bake
And then the child away I'll take
For little deeems my royal dame

That (almost inaudibly) Rumpelstiltzkin is my name!

(He looks around to see if he's being watched and then continues to chant as the LIGHTS FADE)

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 4

(The Gnomes and Rumpelstiltzkin are sleeping around the campfire, snoring loudly. Moonlight illuminates the area around the well. Alethia and a number of the girls come out to draw water.)

MARELDA: (indicating the sleeping gnomes) Such watchmen. We need never fear for our safety with...

TRILBY: Sssh! Did you hear something?

CHILD: (whimpers - older girl covers her mouth)

ALETHIA: (whispering) Where?

TRILBY: Over there, I think. Just outside the clearing. Listen.

ALETHIA: (softly) Who goes there? ... Who goes there?

(A young man, Prince Fredrick, steps out from the bushes)

PRINCE FREDRICK: I saw the light from your cottage...I've been following it from within the woods...(they are speechless) ... I'm lost...I've been lost for days...I hope I haven't frightened you...

MARELDA: It's the witch!

PRINCE FREDRICK: Witch?!

MARELDA: She's trying to trick us. It's the witch, I tell you!

PRINCE FREDRICK: I assure you, I'm only a young man. There's nothing to be frightened of...(he steps towards them. All but Alethia cower and retreat) Please. I am no witch. I won't harm you. I need your help. (They run back into cottage) Don't run away, please. (the gnomes stir in their sleep)

ALETHIA: (gasps) Come here!

(Alethia grabs Fredrick's hand and pulls him down beside the well. A gnome looks about sleepily. Seeing nothing, he puts his head back down.)

ALETHIA: You must be careful. If they find you here, they'll harm you.

PRINCE FREDRICK: Thank you...Are you afraid of me,too?

ALETHIA: A little...perhaps.

PRINCE FREDRICK: But I am no witch.

ALETHIA: I believe you. Besides, the Witch travels far away during the night. She has never returned before dawn - not in all the sixteen years I have been here. I am the oldest...I'll go calm the others down.

PRINCE FREDRICK: Wait...if you please, mistress. It is true that I have been lost in the woods for three days and have had

nothing but berries to eat. If you could spare some food, I would be glad to pay you - in gold.

ALETHIA: We have no interest in your gold. But I will be happy to help you. However, you must be careful not to wake them or I fear something dreadful will happen to both of us. Go and hide yourself at the edge of the clearing. I will bring you food and wine.

PRINCE FREDRICK: Thank you, kind mistress. I shall always remember your courage.

(The Gnomes stir again)

ALETHIA: Quickly, sir. Go to. Go to.

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 5

(Daytime - Three days later.) There is an air of excited secrecy as the girls go about their work.)

ODELIA: Will you see him again tonight, Alethia?

ALETHIA: (coyly) Perhaps. (They look at each other and laugh)

INGRID: He is probably watching you right now from the woods.

ALETHIA: He must stay away during the day, when the witch is near, for all of our safety. He understands that.

RUMPEL.: (entering) Idle chatter! Idle chatter! Get on with your work!

(The children giggle behind his back)

RUMPEL.: What's this? Laughing? What next? To work! To work!
(He exits)

MARELDA: Is he handsome?

ALETHIA: I cannot be sure. We have only spoken in the moonlight. But he is kind and tells me such interesting stories about places called kingdoms beyond the woods.

(They leave their work and congregate.)

CHILD: Is that where he comes from? Beyond the woods?

CHILD: I wish I came from beyond the woods. That is, if they can play games there during the daytime.

CHILD: Does he play during the daytime?

ALETHIA: I'm not sure. His work is being a prince.

HELGA: A prince? Is that anything like the work we do?

ALETHIA: I don't think so for he talks more of hunting and riding horses and living in great big cottages called castles.

MARELDA: It sounds wonderful - if there's no spinning to do.

CHILD: And no gold.

TRILBY: When will he go back to being a prince?

ALETHIA: Although it will make me unhappy, tonight I will urge him to leave. The longer he stays, the greater his chance of being discovered.

(The Tower door has opened and the Witch appears behind them.)

WITCH: (bellows) What's going on here?! You dare to waste my precious time?! To work you lazy things. Or we shall see how well you work with nothing to eat for a few days. Perhaps, one of you would like to come up here and be boiled into a stew for my dinner.

(They return to work, terrified. The Witch cackles and)

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 6

(That evening. Campfire DS. Moonlight US around well.
Rumpelstilzkin and Gnomes are around the campfire. Alethia
lurks in the doorway of the cottage.the tip-toes across clearing.)

RUMPEL.: (chanting and dancing) Tomorrow I brew, today I bake
And then the child away I'll take
For little deems my royal dame
That RUMPELSTILTZKIN IS MY NAME!
Yes, RUMPELSTILTZKIN IS MY NAME!

(The Witch enters and collars Rumpelstilzkin. Alethia crouches in
the shadows near the well.)

WITCH: Caught you again, you disobedient gnome! That chant of
yours will only cause us trouble some day. Do you know what will
happen if their parents discover your name? We would lose everything!
Everything! And you would be back in the woods, living in a tree
stump. So, take care, gnome!

(Alethia slips into the woods.)

WITCH: What was that? (She goes and searches around the well)
Eh, I have a bad feeling - something's amiss. There's too much
whispering and not enough work. Little glances and laughing
quietly. They're too happy. I don't like it! Keep a careful
watch tonight and I shall return here early, just before dawn,
to hear a full report from you and you're men. If something's
going on, we'll uncover it - and the culprits will pay.

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 7

(Moonlight into Pre-Dawn into Dawn)

ALETHIA: It is later than usual. We have been talking for many
hours.

PRINCE FREDRICK: Yes. Would that we could for many, many more.

ALETHIA: I must speak to you of just this matter. Fredrick, you
must go home. You must return to your kingdom. It's much too

dangerous...

PRINCE FREDRICK: All right, I will. But only if you will come with me.

ALETHIA: Come with you?

PRINCE FREDRICK: My father's men are searching for me. I knew they would be. During the day, I have been travelling to the east, listening for their calls. Today, I heard their trumpets. I know where they are camped for the night. We could reach them within the hour. Come with me, please, Alethia. Come with me to my kingdom - and be my wife.

ALETHIA: But what about the others? I could never forget about them.

PRINCE FREDRICK: We could help them if we enlist my father's help. Come with me. Once we are safely married, we will return. You will be the princess of the kingdom. The witch will not dare to deny your wishes.

ALETHIA: Even so, I fear that they will be punished for my disobedience.

PRINCE FREDRICK: You must decide. It is almost dawn.

ALETHIA: Oh, but...

(Rumpelstilzkin enters and sees them.)

RUMPEL.: What's this?! What are you doing here? Who's with you?

ALETHIA: (startled) It's Rumpelstilzkin!

RUMPEL.: Rumpel...(shrieks) How do you know my name!!! My name!! How is it you know?! (He is in a complete frenzy and leaps at Alethia and grabs her.) Help!! Help me!!

(Prince Fredrick intercedes. The Tower door opens and the Witch comes running out, shrieking...)

WITCH: I've got you!! I've got you!!!!

ALETHIA: The Witch!! The Witch!

(The Prince gives Rumpelstiltzkin a final shove and runs off with Alethia. The Gnomes enter to help Rumpelstiltzkin and tumble all over each other, making things worse.)

WITCH: You idiots! After them! After them!

(They bump into each other and finally run off the wrong way.

WITCH: (calling after them) Fools!!! You're going the wrong way... Ach, all this trouble. I'd be better off without the whole lot of you. They'll never catch her. Ach, good riddance to her. Perhaps, it is best to be done with her.

RUMPELSTILTZKIN: (grunting, speechless with fury)

WITCH: What is it now? What's wrong?

RUMPEL.: (blurting) My name! My name! Rumpelstiltzkin is my name!

WITCH: And...

RUMPEL.: She knows it! She knows my name! We can't let her go! We can't let her go!!!

WITCH: This does shed a new light on the situation. You're right. We cannot afford to let her go with such valuable information. I will follow them and take care of this situation myself. You stay here. You've made enough mistakes. (Angrier) I'm warning you, gnome. Tough and bitter though you'd be, I have a notion to boil you into stew if you make just one more mistake.

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 8

(The Marriage Feast. Formalized dancing with Fredrick and Alethia as focal point. Among wedding guests are Princess Kathrine and Prince Theodor. They are presented to the bride and groom. Alethia remarks about the woman's kindness but senses great sadness. Fredrick tells Alethia that the couple are childless although there is a legend about their only child being mysteriously lost. He tells

Alethia that Kathrine has taken an interest in her because she is the same age her daughter would be and because she is struck by the co-incidence of their name's being the same. The food and wine are brought out from the archway and up the stairs. The Witch appears and, one at a time, bewitches the pages and puts potion into the goblets. All but Alethia fall into a drugged sleep. The Witch gives a message to a page who brings it to Alethia. She reads it and runs off after trying unsuccessfully to awaken Fredrick. Finally, Fredrick awakens enough to stagger after Alethia. He picks up the note, reads it, throws it down, draws his sword and runs off after her.

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 9

(The Land of Gold.)

ALETHIA: (rushing into the clearing) Sisters! Sisters! (no answer so rushes to cottage door) They are gone I am too late! (she falls to her knees, sobbing) The Witch has killed them all! It is my fault! She has killed them all!

PRINCE FREDRICK: Alethia! Alethia!

ALETHIA: No one is here! No one!

(There are laughs and shrieks from the tower. Suddenly the door swings open amidst thunder and lightning and The Dragon comes rushing out.)

ALETHIA: (screams) The Witch!

(The Prince fights the Dragon and eventually triumphs. Then sounding of trumpets and armed wedding guests pour onto stage and floor space. Prince Fredrick's father, King Ludwig and Prince Theodor lead the forces. All react to the despoiled Dragon. Suddenly a group of people bring out the maidens and children from the Land of Gold. They are re-united with Alethia. Next the Gnomes are pushed forward, held in check by another group of guests. Finally, Rumpelstiltskin is virtually carried out, kicking

and screaming.)

PRINCESS KATHRINE: (not having seen him in sixteen years)
Little man! (to all) It's the gnome who took our daughter away
from us. Little man! Little man, please tell me where my daughter
Alethia is, please!

RUMPELSTILTZKIN: Never! Never! A bargain is a bargain! You
have not told me my name, so why should I give up your child?

ALETHIA: (gasps and rushes over to whisper in Kathrine's ear.
They grasp each other's hands as Kathrine turns on Rumpelstiltzkin.)

PRINCESS KATHRINE: No more to brew, no more to bake
No more a child away you'll take
For now is known to royal dame
That RUMPELSTILTZKIN is your name!

RUMPELSTILTZKIN: (screams and carries on worse than ever)

Alethia embraces her parents as...

(BLACKOUT)

THE END